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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1363  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2659  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1032  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3048  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2433  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000953

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: OSH TRIP: AMBASSADOR VISITS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX  
CHURCH

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: During the Ambassador's visit to the Russian Orthodox Church in Osh, Father Victor Reemghen spoke of the church's relationship with the local administration, the hierarchical structure of the church, and the stability of the parish community. One of ten Russian Orthodox churches in the south, the Osh church's congregation numbers in the hundreds, and includes ethnic Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Meskhetian Turks, some entering the church by inter-racial marriages. Father Reemghen also gave a tour of the church facilities and adjoining school (which services 102 children grades 1 through 6), while expressing his hope for Embassy support through donations of English textbooks. End summary.

NO GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE  
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12. (C) Having served since 1994 as the pastor to the only Russian Orthodox Church in Osh City, Father Victor Reemghen has witnessed government officials and administrations come and go but the relationship remains strong. He told Ambassador that the government inflicts no pressure on his church, explaining that "all religions are treated alike." At the same time, Reemghen complained that the administration did not provide any financial support either. He said that the Osh City mayor includes his church when holding discussions with civic groups about various social issues. He also stated with pride that the Kyrgyz government recognizes Russian Orthodox Christmas as a national holiday.

A RELIC FROM A "NEW MARTYR"  
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13. (C) Father Reemghen described the hierarchical structure of the Russian Orthodox Church in Central Asia and the recognition of martyrs in the region. Although his administrative supervisor resided in Bishkek, he said, the Archbishop is located in Tashkent, as he has since before the fall of the Soviet Union.

14. (C) Reemghen, who was born in Kazakhstan, was pleased that the Russian Orthodox Church had recently announced the canonization of a priest named Vladimir in Kazakhstan who was killed at the altar while holding services by Soviet authorities during the Bolshevik Revolution. He proudly showed the Ambassador a relic of the new St. Vladimir, a fragment of the vestment he had been wearing when he was cut down by sword-wielding Bolsheviks. Reemghen said that there were numerous religious figures killed during that time period in Central Asia. Although the Russian government was now attempting to play-down Communist-era atrocities, he was encouraged that the Russian Orthodox Church continued the process of recognizing those martyrs. So far, 15,000 "New Martyrs" have been identified, their biographies rigorously verified, and canonized, according to him, and the process is continuing apace.

STABLE CONGREGATION; IMPRESSIVE SCHOOL  
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15. (C) Father Reemghen said that the size of his congregation has held stable, even though many Russian adults had left the region in search of work in Russia. He attributed this to people returning from working abroad, new interest in Christianity among formerly atheist Russians still living in the region, and inter-racial marriages. Reemghen proudly stated that "being ethnic Russian is not necessary" to join his church.

16. (C) The Ambassador toured the Russian Orthodox Church and visited the adjoining school, where Father Reemghen encouraged cooperation with the Embassy to obtain English

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language textbooks. The school provides secular and non-secular courses to 102 students in grades one through six. The Ambassador saw children attending courses on English, geography, and dance choreography. At the end of the tour, Father Reemghen pitched the Ambassador for English language textbooks and expressed his gratitude for the visit and interest of the Ambassador to his church.  
GFOELLER